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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-sixth session
Agenda item 11 (g)

CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF:

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION TO MILITARY SERVICE

Letter dated 20 April 2000* from the Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

On behalf of the co-signatories, I herewith transmit a joint letter on the question of conscientious objection to military service.

We would request that this joint letter be circulated as a document of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on Human Rights, under agenda item 11 (g).

(Signed) Chak Mun SEE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* The annex is reproduced as received, in the language of submission only.

GE.00-13561 (E)

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
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Annex

20 April, 2000

HE Amb Shambhu Ram Simkhada
Chairman, 56th Session
Commission on Human Rights

Dear Amb Simkhada

QUESTION OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION TO MILITARY SERVICE (Item 11g)

1 The delegations represented below would like to refer to the draft resolution submitted by Finland regarding conscientious objection to military service under item 11 (g) contained in document E/CN.4/2000/L.43 which was adopted by the 56th Session on 20 April, 2000.

2 National defence is a fundamental sovereign right under international law. Where individual beliefs or actions run counter to such a right, the right of a state to preserve national security must prevail. Article 29 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights recognise that the exercise of the rights and freedom of the individual is subject to the necessity of ensuring public order and the general welfare of the society.

3 Where a state has established a compulsory military service system under which every citizen is legally required to serve, allowing individuals to be excused from military service would compromise the concept of collective responsibility for national defence, undermine national values and breach the principle of equal application of the law.

4 For the above reasons, we do not recognise the universal applicability of conscientious objection to military service, and therefore dissociate ourselves from the Finnish resolution.

5 We would request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the 56th session of the Commission on Human Rights.

Yours sincerely

(List of co-signatories attached)

List of co-signatories: Joint Statement on Conscientious Objection to Military Service

1. People's Republic of China
2. Arab Republic of Egypt
3. State of Eritrea
4. Islamic Republic of Iran
5. Republic of Iraq
6. Republic of Lebanon
7. Union of Myanmar
8. Republic of Singapore
9. Republic of the Sudan
10. Syrian Arab Republic
11. United Republic of Tanzania
12. Thailand
13. Socialist Republic of Vietnam

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